



NEWSLETTER 53

DECEMBER 2004

GROUP NEWS

MEETING CHANGES

Please note that the meeting at Bath Central Library on the 11th January has had to be **cancelled**. This is because at short notice the Library is being closed for refurbishment. At this late stage it has not been possible to plan an alternative meeting.

For the meeting on the 18th May the meeting location has not been identified. We will be meeting at the Batheaston Car Park opposite the Fat Fryer Fish Shop

A Word from the Editor.

Very belatedly, here is your newsletter for the last part of the year 2003/4, including the minutes of the AGM. It is also my last newsletter. I have enjoyed doing it, but, as the delay on this one will tell you, it has become increasingly difficult to find the time required to pull the newsletter together. I hope you will support the new editor and perhaps be encouraged to make contributions, however, small. I would like to thank those who have so regularly supplied reports for me, especially Bill and Pauline Hanna and Trevor Fawcett, who have acted as reporters on a remarkable number of occasions, and David Crellin for sending out the newsletter when it was complete.

Kirsten Elliott

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE HISTORY OF BATH RESEARCH GROUP 14TH APRIL 2004 AT THE MUSEUM OF BATH AT WORK

1. Apologies were received from Godfrey Laurence. We had a very good turnout with 30 members present representing just over one third of the membership.
2. The minutes of the meeting of 10th April 2003 were confirmed.
3. Matters arising. There were no matters arising.

4. As Chairman, Mary Ede reported on a successful programme of talks and visits for 2003/2004.
 - a. The talks on two Bath businesses given by Michael Lee and Michael King were an interesting new departure which was well received.
 - b. Notes and queries have been successful in a small way and should be continued and encouraged.
 - c. St Stephens had been a successful new venue. The issue of parking was raised and this venue is certainly good from that perspective.
 - d. Mary expressed her thanks to the committee for their efforts especially the meetings secretary, editor of the newsletter and the secretary/treasurer .
5. David Crellin presented the treasurer's report in which he outlined the financial state of the group via a statement of affairs which at present was unaudited. The group has a present balance of £1152.25 which is healthy. He therefore proposed no increase in subscription.
6. Election of the committee. Mary Ede has agreed to stay on for an extra year as Chairman given Michael Rowe's offer to take over the role next year on his retirement. Kirsten Elliott agreed to continue the Newsletter for one more issue and it was agreed that the Committee would look for a replacement at their next meeting. The Chairman pointed out that as a relatively small committee we would welcome offers by any members to serve either now or in the near future. All members being willing to serve a further year, the existing committee were unanimously re-elected on block. Trevor Fawcett recommended that in future the role of treasurer and Secretary should be split if possible again. David Crellin agreed that he would prefer this change to take place. If anyone would be prepared to offer to take up the role of Treasurer that would be most welcome.
7. Meeting and related matters
 - a. Sponsorship of a Bath History Day
 - i. The committee discussed last year the possibility of using some of the surplus funds to sponsor a Bath History Day. The members supported the idea. The following comments were made.
 - ii. We should plan for this to take place in September 2005
 - iii. We will need a small group of volunteers to take the idea forward and make it happen. Interested parties should contact the Chairman.
 - iv. A donation from stall holders would be helpful to cover the costs of planning and setting up the event.
 - b. Donation of a set of Bath directories from Stone King
 - i. Following the meeting presented by Stone King an offer was made to give the group over 80 of the Bath Post office Directories dating from the mid 19th to the mid 20th Century. On behalf of the group David Crellin has accepted these. A note of thanks have been sent.
 - ii. The policy for what we do with these was discussed. The possibilities include:
 1. Donating them on to the record office.
 2. Keeping them and loaning them to members.
 - iii. After discussion it was agreed that we would keep them for loan to members and review this policy at next years AGM. David Crellin will organise this and any members wishing to borrow copies should contact him on 01225 850020.
8. Any other business

Owen Ward asked for recommendations for additions to the Bath Blue Plaque (In fact Bronze) scheme.

BATH HISTORY DAY - At the AGM there was mention of a History day in September 2005. As members will be aware, the BBC decided to run a Historyfest in Bath on September 11th 2004. Not only did the group itself have a stall, but several other members, such as Trevor Fawcett, John Wroughton, and Akeman Press (Kirsten Elliott & Andrew Swift) ran their own stalls, while Marek Lewcun could be discovered manning the Bath Archaeology Trust stand. It was an extraordinarily successful day, with crowds of people visiting the Guildhall. It shows what an interest in the past there is among the public.

MEETINGS OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, JANUARY, & FEBRUARY.

March - Vanishing Bath

Speaker - Cathryn Spence - Report by Trevor Fawcett

This meeting gave members a chance to learn more about the Bath Building Record archive housed at the Building of Bath Museum, particularly the drawings and other material donated by Peter and Ruth Coard and the Green-Armytage collection of roughly 600 slides. Cathryn Spence, the Museum's curator, spoke of the grave loss of Georgian buildings from World War II bombing and from the clearances of the 1960s for housing developments at Balance Street, Snow Hill, Holloway and other places. For a twelve-year period in the 1960s and 70s the Coards and a team of helpers strove to record buildings, building details and streetscapes, especially those under threat, trying to be as objective as possible. Various methods were employed - accurate drawings usually in ink, slide photography, and the assembling of plans, newspaper cuttings, etc. It was mainly a labour of love since the team received only one small grant of £50 - towards the cost of photography. Some of Peter Coard's work was published, notably in his book *Vanishing Bath* (1973). Meanwhile, actual bits and pieces of buildings and their fittings were rescued from demolition sites and then stored - for up to 25 years - in the Coards' garage. Some of this eventually came to the Museum. Despite the lack of sufficient storage the Museum does, of course, hold many physical specimens, and should soon receive two original carved stone acorns from the circus, shipped back from South Carolina no less, in time for the forthcoming John Wood exhibition, Cathryn Spence's comments on the so-called 'sack of Bath' in the 1950s - 1970s elicited a lively discussion which ranged from the urgent re-housing needs of the time to the 'arrogance' of some of the architectural solutions. And after all this there was still time to examine items on display and to visit the Museum's Sainsbury Gallery.

April - New Acquisitions at the Museum of Bath at Work

Speaker - Stuart Burroughs - Report by David Crellin.

Stuart gave an overview of the development of the museum which is just 25 years old. He explained that the name of the museum had gone through a number of iterations over the years but interestingly the first name was the Camden Works Museum and the by-line was "The Museum of Bath at Work"; its present name! Stuart is confident that this is the name that will last into the future.

The origins of the Museum are based on the Bowler collection of industrial factory artefacts. In more recent times it has become more and more appropriate to think of the museum from the viewpoint of the people who worked in Bath rather than the machines they used. In addition for a city that is world famous for its Georgian architecture the museum has been ploughing a rather lonely furrow to concentrate on an area of history that does not have the International significance of John Wood but which in fact was significant in enabling the City to become famous for its architecture. Indeed, the museum increasingly considers any aspect of the work that the population carried out in Bath as being a part of its mandate including industries such as hostelry and other services.

Recently the museum has been awarded a Lottery grant and Stuart explained the wonderful new display cases which show off these key elements of the history of Bath at work as we perceive it today.

These display cases are versatile and at relatively low cost it will be possible to change the format and objects on display so that new acquisitions can be selected and in future changing perspectives of Bath at work can be acknowledged. The cases also have a provision to display light sensitive objects at each end and at a lower level objects that will be of interest to younger visitors.

In summary the museum has evolved from a museum based on the Bowler collection to a museum whose philosophical basis is social history and hence the Museum of Bath at Work.

May - A Tour of Weston

Speaker - Gillian Cope - Report by Kirsten Elliott

This was a meeting that nearly had to be cancelled when the programmed leaders of the walk around Weston had to drop out, but fortunately Mrs Gillian Cope kindly offered at very late notice to take members of the group around the village in which she lives.

The walk began in the heart of the village, by the War Memorial. Much of the wool which went into weaving cloth in Bath and the villages of Widcombe and Twerton came from the sheep sleights of Weston. Yet perhaps Weston is best known for its laundresses. With so many springs, which flowed into the Loxbrook, that is hardly surprising. It also has a wide range of interesting old houses, although, sadly, many disappeared in the nineteen-sixties, when they were not considered to be worth keeping.

The walk began by heading slightly eastwards, and looking at the Old Crown public house, with its sign advertising Home Brewed Beer. It stood by an old route into Bath. Heading up towards the church, one passes some fine Georgian houses, including Vine House with its date of 1708, and Lansdown House. Walking up Church Road, members also noted the little statue over the doorway of No 43. This is said to be a statue of the young St Alphege - Weston's very own saint. This house was the home of Joan Hargood-Ash, who researched so much of Weston's history.

The group spent some time wandering around the graveyard of All Saints Church, which has some very fine tombs. These include the family grave of the Oliver family - Dr William Oliver acquired the manor about 1760, and died there in 1764. Perhaps the most visited grave is that of Thomas Attwood, City Architect, who died in 1775. His grave was designed by his protégé and successor as City Architect, Thomas Baldwin. Baldwin was also responsible in his later years for the Vicarage, which replaced the Jacobean one. The older building was not demolished but survives at the side of the Georgian one. The church itself was designed by Pinch the Younger in 1832.

Despite the prominent position of the church, the local men seem to have spent their time in the pub, if the number of them is anything to go by. The Old Crown, the King's Head and the Crown and Anchor still survive, the last with its magnificent sign, but there was also the Queen's Head (conveniently opposite the King's Head), the Globe - Bath's tiniest pub with a bar just three feet long, the White Lion, the Mason's Arms, the Bladud's Head, and, for the really thirsty, two more up towards Sion Hill. There were also two breweries, which faced each other on each side of Trafalgar Road, Morgan's and Pointings, on which a sign can still faintly be seen advertising the beer.

At the westward end of the village, Gillian pointed out the remains of a bridge over the Loxbrook, which is now culverted - although in extreme weather it can still cause flooding in the village. She also pointed out the White House, formerly Weston Lodge. Not only does this extensive building date back to the 17th century, although with many additions, but it has a curious story attached to it.

Apparently one lady owner simply walked out of the house one day - and disappeared. From here a walk along the High Street revealed an astonishing variety of vernacular architectural styles. These included the old newsagents, now magnificently restored, the ancient Pen Farmhouse, and Flagon Cottage.

As ever with a tour comprising members of the History of Bath Research Group, the tour occasioned much lively discussion, and the group thanked Gillian Cope for a most thought-provoking tour.

June -The Lansdown Battlefield.

Speakers -John Wroughton- Report by Leo Calvin-Thomas

On June 9th, 17 members had a splendid tour over the ground on which the Battle of Lansdown had been fought. Dr John Wroughton took us vividly through the day of July 5th, 1643 as we saw where the significant actions took place in a landscape largely unchanged from the 17th century.

During the night Sir William Waller had stationed his forces in a position which gave him control of the top of Lansdown and as the Royalist forces approached the area they realized that they had been outwitted. The Royalists consequentially took up position in a cornfield known locally as Tog Hill and over a mile from Waller's force. Eventually, after some desultory skirmishing, the Royalists began to move forward, only to find that Waller's troops were charging at them down the hill. Eventually, however, the tables were turned and the Royalists gained the advantage. The Roundheads were trapped in a lane and "observed to be in some disorder". Waller's withdrawal from the ridge convinced the Royalists that victory was within their grasp, and they finally gained control of the brow of the hill, forcing the Roundhead cavalry to retreat. (Subsequently the Parliamentarians claimed that they had surrendered the ridge by choice). Waller had withdrawn to a new position behind a stone wall running across the down and had lined the wall with musketeers. As dusk fell explosions could be heard from as far away as Bristol but there was no more hand to hand fighting. Both sides in fact retreated.

John Wroughton, in assessing the significance of the battle said: "The story of Lansdown has always been dominated by the stirring but misplaced bravery of Sir Bevil Grenville ... Royalist historians in concentrating on the courageous exploits of the Cornish foot have had their judgement blurred by the clouds of admiration so raised. A curious assumption has inevitably followed that because Grenville's men succeeded in storming the ridge that the battle had been won. The reverse is true. It was because the Cornish foot had insisted on reaching the ridge that the battle was lost. The capture of the ridge was one of the most purposeless acts of the war ... Waller on the other hand was always in control of his own army and the general situation."

BOOK REVIEWS & RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Stuart Bath: Life in the Forgotten City, 1603-1714 by John Wroughton published by Lansdown Press
This is a longer review of the book mentioned in the last edition of the newsletter. This was a book long overdue. Most modern books about Bath in the seventeenth century, including those by John Wroughton, had concentrated on the Civil War period. This book, which opens with Bath in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, takes us right into the eighteenth century, when Bath is ready to change into the city which we would recognize today. And change was needed, for, as John Wroughton points out, there was very little difference between Speed's Map of 1610 and a plan of 1723. However, the signs of growth are there, for Trim Street has already been built.

Almost every aspect of life is covered – political events are described – indeed, one whole chapter is dedicated to them – but this is very much a social history. It deals with the weaving trade, with sickness and health, the rich and the poor, and, not surprisingly, the history of King Edward’s School. The baths, and their use throughout this period are also chronicled. It would be fair to say that this is a most exhaustive, but readable, introduction to this period. Among the illustrations are some with which members of the HBRG will be familiar, but also many which are more unusual, some coming from the author’s own collection. Where a contemporary illustration has not been available, then artist Stephen Beck has provided some lively drawings.

Even if Stuart Bath is not your particular field of interest, anyone wishing to know more about the background to Bath’s later success must find this book of great value.

***Bathwick - A Forgotten Village** by Bathwick Local History Society, published by Bathwick Local History Society in association with Millstream Books.*

Let me explain first of all what this book is not. It is not a short history of Bathwick, nor is it a guide or guided tour of Bathwick. The style is based very much on the *Bath History* series of books, and is a series of articles about selected parts of the parish. The introduction is by someone whose name is familiar to HBRG members – Michael Rowe. He describes it as “a compelling read”, and he is quite right. Sheila Edwards, chairman of the Society, keeps a firm hand on the tiller, and there are none of the self-indulgences to which some books produced by local history societies can be prone. The book is fully annotated with references and notes, and comes with a full bibliography.

The scene is set with the first two chapters dealing with the development of Bathwick before tackling specific buildings such as the churches and mortuary chapel (a very welcome study given many of the misconceptions and stories which have found their way into print.). Having laid the groundwork, the book then deals with subjects such as the City Prison, erected by William Johnstone Pulteney as a quid pro quo for taking down the old prison as part of his plans for the Pulteney estate. Incredibly, demolition was seriously considered for this fine and remarkable Georgian building in the dark days of the 1960s. The canal, and its effects on Bathwick, are considered at some length, and, with the controversy over the Cleveland Baths fresh in everyone’s minds, it will come as no surprise to find there is not one but two sections dealing with public bathing in Bathwick.

This is a really commendable piece of work, and I for one, especially since I now live in Bathwick, will be waiting eagerly for the next instalment.

BLUE PLAQUES FOR BATH

A general survey of the ‘blue’ plaque scheme, which originated in London, is being planned by English Heritage, and B&NES is having a few thoughts about the plaques they have, and the ones they don’t have, in Bath. Many of the existing ones are in any case so discreet as to be quasi-invisible. Comments and suggestions from interested parties, such as the History of Bath Research group, will be appreciated. Alexander Graham Bell, Sir Isaac Pitman, Stothert & Pitt *et al*, will have their champions, while other outstanding industrialists, business men and other entrepreneurs generally have been overlooked.

A few basic details are needed for a plaque: full name, dates, occupation or other reason for the plaque, and its location. Corroborative reference to an appropriate authority would be helpful. It is assumed that the Bath plaques will not actually be blue. Frome is to have dark green ones with white lettering.

Suggestions please, to Owen Ward or Stuart Burroughs.

Editor's Note. My feeling is that the present plaques should be revised where necessary. Many are hopelessly wrong. Dickens, who reputedly "dwelt" at Savage Landor's house in St James's Square, actually never even spent the night there. Others are even more wildly incorrect. What do other members think?

BATH CATTLE AND CORN MARKET

Owen Ward raised a query with me a few months ago about the cattle market vaults which can be seen from the river bank beneath the car park next to the corn market. These fit in with the description I found of the corn market when it was built in the early 19th century. My guidebook of 1813 states "the vaults beneath communicate with the river, and are well-calculated for wholesome slaughter-houses". But this date raises a query which is very much in the minds of those of us who are concerned about the appalling state of the cornmarket. The council seems keen to propagate the idea that it is mid-Victorian. While it may have been refurbished in the 1850s, the main part is late-Georgian. The house, which was taken over to form the entrance is certainly Georgian. Market and house appear on Cotterell's detailed survey of the early 1850s, before, according to some authorities, either existed. I think it is time to produce a proper history, and perhaps archaeological survey, of this sadly neglected building before someone is given the permission to pull it down. Does anyone else agree? KTE.

CHANGE of ADDRESS and NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members

Miss M C Hunt,
Studio 114,
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Miss Hunt has a number of queries which members may be able to help with:

- 1 Does anyone have any information about the exhibition held in Bath in the 19th Century by the "pioneer of Egyptian archaeology" Giovanni Battista Belzoni?
- 2 Has anyone come across an article by Dr Wilkinson in the "Bath Herald" on the subject?
- 3 Miss Hunt is also interested in any information members may have on Emma Hamilton in connection with Bath.

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Research Interests Bath architecture particularly John Pinch

Finally May I take this opportunity to thank Kirsten for her efforts over the years in preparing the Newsletter.

David Crellin